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GER - Mr. J. C. Lausland

July 17, 1961

SOV - William O. Anderson

Informal Comments on Your Draft Concerning Discontent  
in East Germany

WA

After a quick reading, I find that I am in substantial agreement with the points made in your draft, i.e., the linkage between current unsatisfactory economic conditions and the tough Soviet and East German line on Berlin. For planning purposes, I would note that trouble could appear in a number of different ways, all of which cannot be anticipated. Of possible use to you, I am enumerating a few of these ways since the form of U.S. action would be closely linked to the form in which serious trouble might arise.

1. A large group of workers in one central point, e.g., East Berlin, might engage in a passive strike or a public meeting to voice grievance.
2. Similar action might be taken by workers or students at widely scattered points throughout East Germany. In either set of circumstances, there would constantly be present the possibility that a passive demonstration could evolve into something involving physical force, as it did in 1953.
3. East German workers might appeal to the Federal Republic for help. If so, such an appeal would raise somewhat different problems for the U.S. than would a direct appeal from the East Germans to the U.S. or the three Western powers in West Berlin, particularly if the Federal Republic wanted to respond to the appeal.
4. Should a sudden rumor circulate among East Germans that travel to West Berlin or to West Germany would be cut off, there might appear a spontaneous movement of East Germans to the zonal and sector crossing points with a view to seeking peaceful, although unauthorized exit. Such movements could result in the use of firearms or clubs by East German authorities against those seeking passage across the border.

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5. Should incidents develop which East German security forces would regard as potentially serious, it seems quite probable that they would take steps having the effect of interfering not only with the movement of East Germans but also with the movement on the ground of West German nationals, and possibly West Berliners or members of the occupation forces seeking to transit the Soviet zone. The same circumstances might also result in East German action of some kind against the U.S. Potsdam Mission.

I think that we can assume that the West would be accused of provocation in any event should trouble arise in East Germany. It would seem very important that the West scrupulously refrain from actions or statements which might incite East German unrest unless there had been a prior decision to carry through positively a response to any request from the East for help.

In considering courses of action which might be taken after an incident had arisen, there might be circumstances under which an East German request for help might be deflected. For example, the East Germans might be induced to appeal to the United Nations to sponsor an immediate secret vote on reunification; they might appeal for food and consumer goods; they might appeal for a withdrawal of Soviet forces from East Germany; they might merely appeal for the continued right to move freely within Berlin under existing four-power agreements and call for the free movement of Germans between the two parts of Germany. Each of these represents the kind of action on which the West should be able to muster considerable moral support while sidestepping the more critical kind of appeal for direct military help. Even if combined Soviet and East German security forces prevented any favorable action on such appeals, the public posture of the West would be considerably improved and the stature of the East German regime would probably take an immediate embarrassing drop.

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